

OHS Launches 1st Seat Belt Enforcement Campaign for 2012

Dover – Delaware Office of Highway Safety and law enforcement officials have some simple advice to keep you safe both day and night every time you get in a car: buckle up. The first wave of seat belt enforcement for 2012 comes on the heels of a single vehicle night time fatal crash in New Castle County in which all 3 occupants were not wearing their seat belts. Two occupant's sustained minor injuries; however the driver was killed.

Seat belt use is often 10% lower at night than during the day even though a person's chances of being killed in a crash at night triples! In fact, more than a third of Delaware's fatal crashes (35%) involving an unrestrained driver or passenger in 2010 occurred during the night time hours.

In an effort to increase seat belt use statewide, the Delaware Office of Highway Safety is launching the first of five waves of seat belt enforcement for 2012 to run from January 22 to February 5. This enforcement initiative is a high visibility enforcement and public awareness campaign aimed at saving lives by increasing the number of Delawareans who regularly buckle up.

Drivers should expect to see stepped up enforcement of Delaware's seat belt laws throughout the Delaware by State, County, and municipal police agencies who will conduct both roving and stationary traffic safety patrols.

Delaware's seat belt law requires all vehicle occupants, even back seat passengers, to be "properly" buckled up. "Properly" means that both lap and shoulder belts must be worn. In particular, the shoulder belt must be worn across the chest. Anyone who puts the shoulder belt under their arm, or behind

their back is in violation of state law and is putting themselves at greater risk for being seriously injured in a crash.

The law allows officers to pull over a driver if he/she sees any person in the vehicle not wearing a safety belt. Officers will issue citations for seat belt violations as part of a zero-tolerance policy. The ticket, which goes to the driver no matter who is unbuckled in the vehicle, is a \$25.00 fine plus court administrative fees.

In addition, Delaware's child restraint law says that the driver is responsible for making sure all children in the vehicle are properly buckled up. All children under the age of 8 years or 65lbs must be in the appropriate child restraint seat (an infant, toddler or booster seat). Children who are 8 or at least 65lbs in weight, whichever comes first must be restrained in a seat belt. Children under the age of 12 must ride in the back seat when front seat passenger air bags are present. Child restraint violations are also \$25.00 plus court administrative fees.

The other waves of seat belt enforcement will take place in May, June, July, and August. Delaware's current seat belt use rate for 2011 is 90%, a decrease from an all-time high of 91% in 2010. The national seat belt use rate is 85%.

For more information on Delaware's seat belt law or enforcement campaigns, please visit the Office of Highway Safety's website at www.ohs.delaware.gov, Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ArriveAliveDE, or Follow us on Twitter @DEHighwaySafe.